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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION Q IRAQ - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Monday morning's Nihon Keizai and Tokyo Shimbun front-paged the results of weekend polls on gubernatorial and local elections to be held April 8, with incumbent Gov. Ishihara running ahead in Tokyo, followed by DPJ-backed former Miyagi Gov. Asano.

¶1. "Chaos in Iraq Cannot Be Ignored" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri editorialized (3/31): "With terrorist attacks continuing and sectarian violence intensifying, the situation in Iraq is becoming more serious. As a member of the international community, it is a matter of course that Japan should continue cooperating with the UN and the 26 countries working to keep Iraq from falling apart to open the way for reconstruction. The GOJ has sent to the Diet a bill revising the Iraq Reconstruction Special Measures Law to extend Air Self-Defense Force airlift operations in Iraq by another two years. The government must pass this bill during the current Diet session. Although the US military and Iraqi security forces are undertaking large-scale operations to restore security in Iraq, there are no visible signs of improvement. If the chaos in Iraq were to destabilize the region as a whole, this would damage Tokyo's national interests, as Japan depends on the Middle East for about 90 percent of its crude oil imports."

SCHIEFFER